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WOMEN COUNT 2000



A Statistical Profile of Women in British Columbia

Fourth Edition

Making history, building futures



Ministry of Women's Equality
Province of British Columbia
Victoria, B.C.

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A MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER

As Minister of Women's Equality, I'm pleased to introduce *Women Count 2000*, the fourth edition of *Women Count: A Statistical Profile of Women in British Columbia*. It contains current data about B.C. women from both B.C. and Canadian studies.

I know you'll find this report interesting reading. It gives us a tool to identify the economic, social, and cultural factors that affect our lives. It helps us measure how far we've come. And it provides us with concrete indicators of where further effort is needed to achieve equality for women.

In the last half-century the participation rate of women in the labour market has more than doubled. And we are showing up in a wider spectrum of careers than ever before. But the facts show that most of us still work in a relatively narrow range of occupations. And, over all, we continue to earn substantially less than men do. A significant number of senior women, one-parent families headed by women, and Aboriginal and visible minority women live in poverty. It's no surprise that B.C. women of all ages gave economic issue as one of their main personal concerns in a recent poll.

Women Count takes a look at the factors that affect our economic security. It also explores women's involvement in education, our family and housing situations, and the factors that impact our health and safety. A final section provides a status report on our increasing presence in positions of influence.

Our Year 2000 edition gives a deservedly greater profile to women of Aboriginal ancestry, visible minority women and women with disabilities. We think you'll enjoy the **Looking Back** features that profile the changes women in B.C. and Canada have seen over the past century. **Woman Making History**, a timeline of historic events, also highlights the milestones we've achieved.

I think of *Women Count* as a starting point, a snapshot of the status of women in our province today. Let's use it to celebrate our achievements and to advance our efforts to attain social and economic equality for women in B.C.

Joan Smallwood
Minister of Women's Equality

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Demographics



Changing demographics have significant implications for individuals and society. Over the long term, birthrates have declined, and the group of individuals who form the "baby boom" generation are now middle-aged. People are living longer and policy and programs must increasingly respond to the needs of an aging population.

Immigration to Canada from regions other than Europe has increased, bringing a valuable diversity to the population. This also creates increasing demands on government to provide accessible programs and services.

A Woman in British Columbia

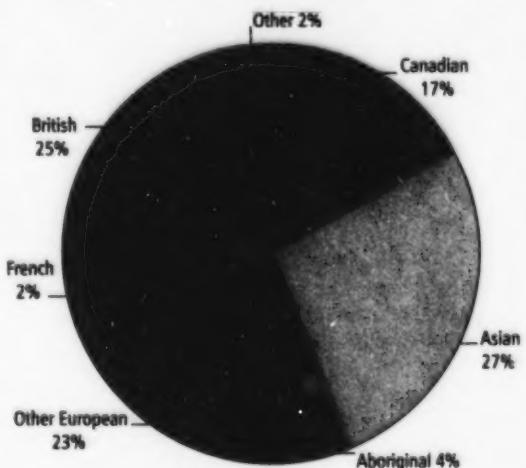
"Woman." Who is she? Is she someone like me? Is she someone not like me? Imagine 100 women.¹ Many of us are more than one of these:

- 25 of us are under 20 years old;
- 14 of us are over 65 years old;
- 18 of us are members of a visible minority group;
- 26 of us are immigrants;
- 7 of us are lesbians;²
- 4 of us have disabilities;
- 4 of us are Aboriginal;
- 1 of us is francophone; and,
- 59 of us participate in the labour force.

Statistical Profile of British Columbia

As of the 1996 census, Canada's population was 28,846,761. B.C.'s population was 3,724,500,³ or 13.2% of the population of Canada. The total population in B.C. in 1999 was estimated to be 4,029,300 with women accounting for 50.3% of this figure and men accounting for 49.7%.⁴

Ethnic Origin of the British Columbia Population, 1996⁵



Aboriginal Population

Estimates of population of First Nations peoples in what is now British Columbia vary prior to first contact with European and British explorers.⁶ One estimate places B.C.'s Aboriginal population in 1835 at approximately 80,000.⁷ Currently, Aboriginal people account for 3.8% of B.C.'s population. Aboriginal women make up 51.2% of this number, or 71,450 of 139,655 people.⁸

**WOMEN
MAKING
HISTORY**

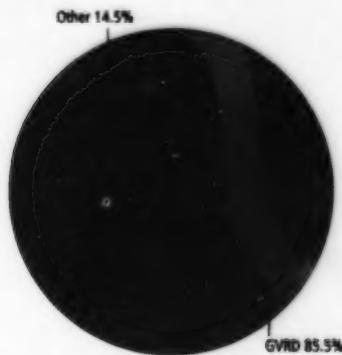
1822

Isabella, the daughter of an Ojibway mother, marries Charles Ross. In 1844, she becomes the first woman property owner in B.C.

Visible Minority Population

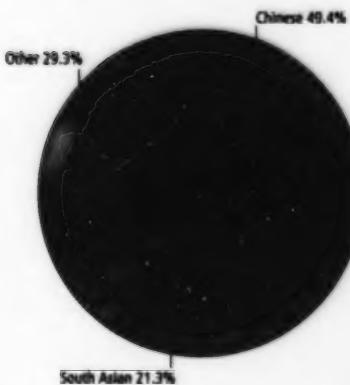
In 1996, 660,540 people in B.C. identified themselves as members of a visible minority community. This accounted for 17.9% of the population, with women representing 51.1% and men representing 48.9% of the visible minority population. In British Columbia 85.5% of those who self-identify as a member of a visible minority group live in the Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD)⁹ and constitute 31.3% of the GVRD population.

Visible Minority Population in British Columbia, 1996



Two ethnic groups make up 70.7% of the visible minority population in the GVRD, with Chinese at 49.4% and South Asian at 21.3%.¹⁰

Visible Minority Population in GVRD, 1996



The distribution of men and women within visible minority groups in B.C. reflects that of the general population, with the exception of the Filipino community, where women represent 61% of the population.¹¹

Women with Disabilities

In 1991 there were an estimated 650,775 women in Canada who had a disability, representing 3.5% of the Canadian population. The total Canadian population of persons with a disability in 1991 was 1,285,000.¹² Of Canadians with a disability, 13.6% (174,560) live in B.C.¹³

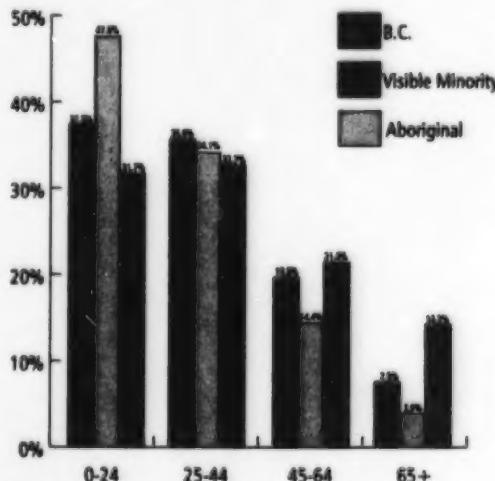
Age Distribution of the Population

In British Columbia the largest age group of women consists of those between 25 and 44 years of age (32.7%).¹⁴ Similarly, the largest age group of visible minority women and men is the 25-44 age group (35.6%). The largest age group for Aboriginal women is also the 25-44 year-olds (34.1%).

PERCENT WOMEN'S POPULATION BY AGE			
Age	B.C. ¹⁷	Visible Minority ¹⁸	Aboriginal ¹⁹
0-14	19.0%	20.6%	30.3%
15-24	12.7%	16.7%	17.3%
25-44	32.7%	35.6%	34.1%
45-64	21.4%	19.6%	14.4%
65+	14.2%	7.5%	3.9%

However, the proportion of the Aboriginal population under 25 years of age (47.6%), is significantly larger than that of the general population (31.7%) or the visible minority population (37.3%).¹⁵ Moreover, both Aboriginal (3.9%) and visible minority (7.5%) female populations aged 65 and over are significantly lower than that of the general population.¹⁶

Percent Women's Population by Age in British Columbia, 1995



First commercial cannery opens on Skeena River — nearly 150 Aboriginal women work there each season. Three years later, nearly 400 Aboriginal women work in fish canneries on the Fraser River.

1873

Caucasian women property-holders in B.C., both married and unmarried, can vote in municipal elections.

1877

1885

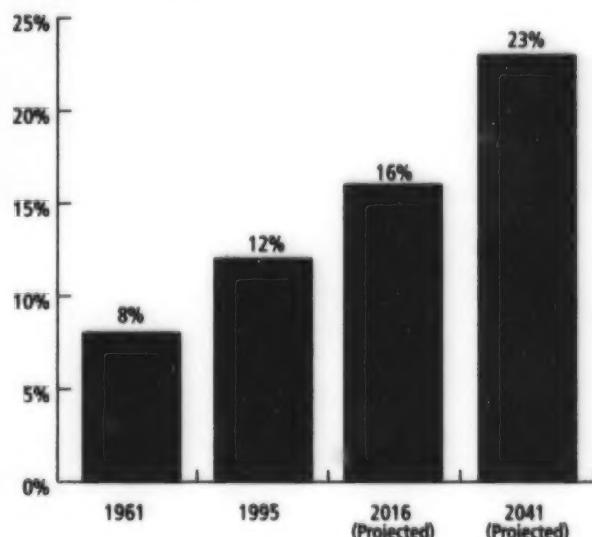
Mrs. G. Grant draws up and presents the first suffrage petition to the B.C. legislature.

The Aging Population

Trends for the aging of British Columbia's population are similar to those of the Canadian population, for which more information is available. Over the years, the combined effects of low birth rates and mortality levels have resulted in an age structure with a larger proportion of older people and a smaller proportion of younger people. In 1961 nearly four in 10 people (40%) were under age 18. Since the late 1960s, young people accounted for just one in four people (24%) in 1995. At the same time, seniors accounted for 12% of the population, compared with 8% in 1961.

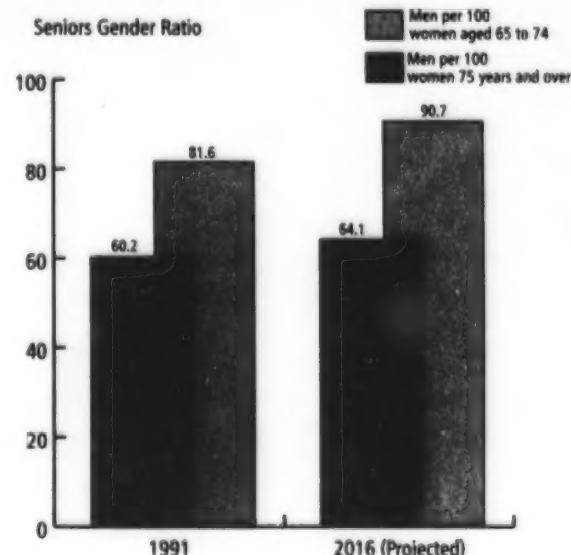
This aging of the population is expected to continue because of increased longevity and the aging of the "baby boom" generation. By 2016, the number of seniors in Canada is expected to grow to nearly six million, accounting for 16% of the population. By 2041, the number of seniors will be nearly 10 million, triple its present level. By then, almost one in four people (23%) will be aged 65 and over.

Population in British Columbia 65 and over



Because life expectancy for men is catching up with that for women, the imbalance in the male/female ratio for seniors will decrease. In 1991 there were 81.6 men per 100 women aged 65 to 74, and 60.2 men per 100 women 75 years and over. These ratios will increase to 90.7 and 64.1 for the two age groups by 2016.²⁰

Seniors Gender Ratio



Population Trends, 1991 - 1996

Between 1991 and 1996, British Columbia had the fastest population growth rate of all provinces at 13.5%, more than double the national average of 5.7%. International immigration accounted for about 45% of this growth; interprovincial migration 35%; and natural increase (births minus deaths), about 20%.²¹

Between 1991 and 1996, the B.C. immigrant population grew nearly 25%. The ethnic mosaic of B.C.'s immigrant population continues to shift as the share of the immigrant population who were European-born dropped from 49.5% in 1991 to 40.1% in 1996, while those who are Asian-born increased from 33.8% to 44.4% for the same period.²²

Intermarriage has led to a growing number of people having multiple ethnic origins. This is particularly evident in British Columbia. In 1996, 35.8% of Canadians and 44.1% of British Columbians (1,625,555) identified themselves as having multiple ethnic origins.²³

Belinda Mulrooney, founder of the town of Grand Forks, runs a successful mining operation in the Klondike. By 1898 she owns and has partners in 10 mining claims in the Klondike.

Agnes Deans Cameron becomes the first woman school principal in B.C.

1888
Chinese Rescue Home opens in Victoria to provide support and shelter to women of Chinese descent. In 1895, Japanese women start using the home. It closes in 1942.

1890s

A missionary school for Aboriginal girls opens in Kitimat. The school is headed by Elizabeth Long, and has 30 students who study typesetting to print a community newspaper called NaNaKwa.

1894

Looking Back

Early British Columbians

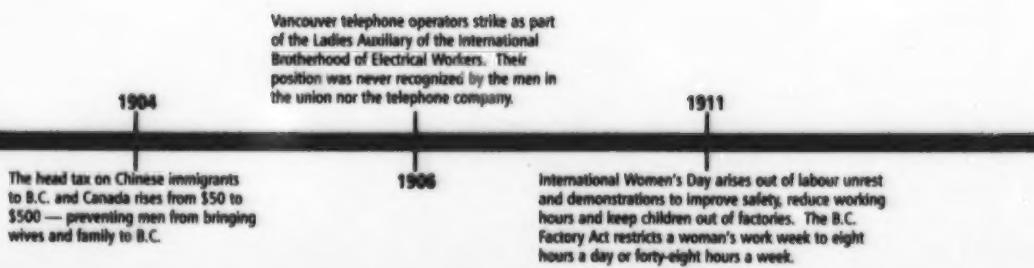
The primary source of demographic information about British Columbia is the national census. It is conducted every five years by Statistics Canada. The first census was taken in 1666 in New France. That census excluded Aboriginal people and royal troops. It showed that there were 3,215 inhabitants, comprised of 2,034 men (63.3%) and 1,181 women (36.7%).²⁴ The first census in British Columbia was conducted in 1871. The total population of the Province at that time was 36,247. It has since increased more than 100 fold.²⁵

In 1897 British Columbia's Aboriginal population was estimated at 24,946, a quarter of Canada's total Aboriginal population.²⁶

As a colonial territory, British Columbia's population growth resulted chiefly from immigration; between the years of 1901 and 1911, B.C.'s population increased by 119%.²⁷ From the early to mid-1900s, B.C.'s

population was predominantly young and male, with men outnumbering women at every age.²⁸ In 1901, women made up 36.1% of B.C.'s population.²⁹

Throughout the first half of the 20th century, most immigrants to B.C. were of British origin. At this time, government policies were aimed at restricting Asian immigration. In 1904, the prohibitive Head Tax was raised to \$500 per person (from \$50 in 1885) and from 1923 to 1947 the Immigration (Exclusion) Act prohibited Chinese immigration, making it impossible for Chinese workers to bring their families over at any price.³⁰ Between 1961 and 1971, 75% of Canada's immigrants came from Europe and the United States. In the 1960s the immigration laws were changed and Canada welcomed people from around the world. Today only about 20% of Canada's immigrants come from Europe and the U.S., and 42.6% of all immigrants come from Hong Kong, the Philippines, India and China.³¹



Women's Economic Status

WOMEN AND ECONOMIC EQUALITY

 The past 30 years has seen a huge increase in the number of women participating in the paid labour force, particularly for women with young children. Women have access to a broader range of employment and entrepreneurial opportunities than they have ever had in the past. Notwithstanding many advances, women continue to face particular challenges in achieving economic security and economic equality with men. They continue to be concentrated in traditional fields of employment for women, and the gap between the wages of men and women remains entrenched. Additionally, women shoulder a disproportionate share of family responsibilities, including childcare, caring for elderly family members and household chores.

Labour Force Participation

Statistics Canada defines the paid labour force as all people who are employed full-time or part-time, or are unemployed and actively seeking work. In 1996, women accounted for 46.7% of British Columbia's labour force of 2,068,025.³² At a Canada-wide level, women with a disability accounted for 3.0% of the labour force,³³ visible minority women accounted for 4.8% of the labour force,³⁴ and Aboriginal women accounted for 1.0%.³⁵ As of 1999, an estimated 59.2% of all women in B.C. were either working or actively looking for work.³⁶

Self-Employment and Small Business

The number of self-employed Canadian women nearly tripled in the last two decades, while numbers for men have not quite doubled. By 1999, a total of 2,462,900 Canadians were self-employed, of whom 862,400 (35.0%) were women. Women in British Columbia participate in self-employment to a greater extent. Of the 392,600 self-employed individuals in British Columbia in 1999, 140,800 (35.9%) were women, up from 30.5% in 1984.³⁷

Self-employed women are generally sole owner-operators in traditional female-dominated service sectors (e.g., housecleaning, office services, personal services). They make up nearly three-quarters of self-employed Canadian women. Earnings for women who are sole owner-operators are low — \$15,000 a year on average.

The proportion of women employers more than doubled between 1976 and 1997, from 1.4% of the female labour force to 3.4%. Women business owners are diversifying into non-traditional sectors. The highest concentration in B.C. in 1998 was in the retail trade sector.³⁸ The

participation of women employers in the primary, manufacturing and construction sectors grew from just 3.4% in 1977 to 13.3% in 1997. Now one in eight women employers is in the goods sector. Earnings of women who are business owners and have employees are significantly better than for those women who are simply self-employed. These women earn \$27,600 on average.³⁹

Unions

In 1998 over a third (36.2%) of British Columbia's 1,597,000 workers were union members.⁴⁰ In 1998 full-time unionized women in B.C. earned \$19.22 per hour, or 88.8% of the hourly wage received by unionized B.C. men. In comparison, non-unionized B.C. women earned \$13.27 per hour, or 76.6% of the hourly wage of non-unionized B.C. men.⁴¹ In 1976, 28% of women in British Columbia belonged to a union.⁴² By 1998 this had risen to 34.8% of women.⁴³ Canada-wide, women's union membership is concentrated primarily in community business and personal services (59.0%), followed by government services (17.6%).⁴⁴

Unemployment and Under-employment

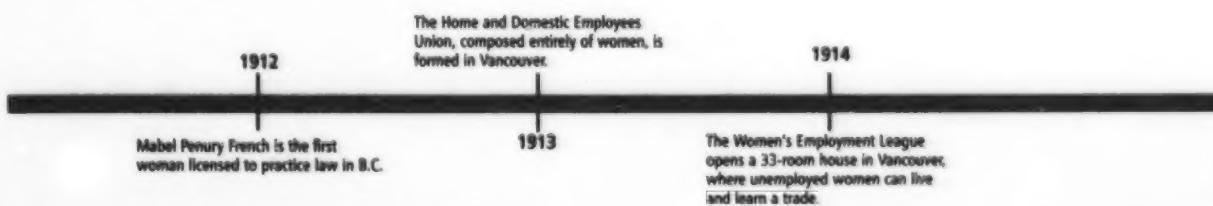
In 1999, women in the British Columbia labour force included 7.5% unemployed women, as compared to 9.0% of all men within the labour force who were unemployed.⁴⁵

Women are more likely than men to work part-time. In 1999, 31.6% of all employed British Columbia women worked part-time, compared with only 12.9% of men.⁴⁶ Of paid employees between the ages of 25 and 34, with irregular work schedules, 13.3% of women and 0.3% of men reported childcare as a key reason for having irregular work schedules.⁴⁷

Almost 38.8% of single mothers with pre-school children would like to have more hours of paid work.⁴⁸ Lack of access to childcare is cited by many women as a reason for not participating more in the paid labour force.⁴⁹

Career Interruptions in the Paid Labour Force

In the early 1990s, 47% of women temporarily leaving the labour force left for family-related reasons. Between 1990 and 1994, economic reasons, including unemployment, accounted for 22% of women being temporarily out of the labour force.



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Based on 1994 information, of those women leaving the labour force due to the birth of a child, 79% of women returned to work within two or more months after the birth. These women were most likely to be employed full-time, 38% belonged to a union, 43% were in professional, managerial, or technical occupations, and 2% were self-employed. Only 9% had no maternity benefits. Of the 21% of women who returned to work within one month, 60% had no maternity benefits, and 34% were self-employed. They were most likely to be in low-wage, non-unionized and part-time jobs.⁵⁰

Occupations

Most women continue to work in a narrow range of occupations. The top three occupations for women are sales and service (35.3%), business, finance and administrative (29.5%) and social science, education, government service and religion (8.7%). For comparison, the top three occupations for men are trades, transport and equipment operators and related (26.3%), sales and service (21.4%) and management (12.0%).⁵¹

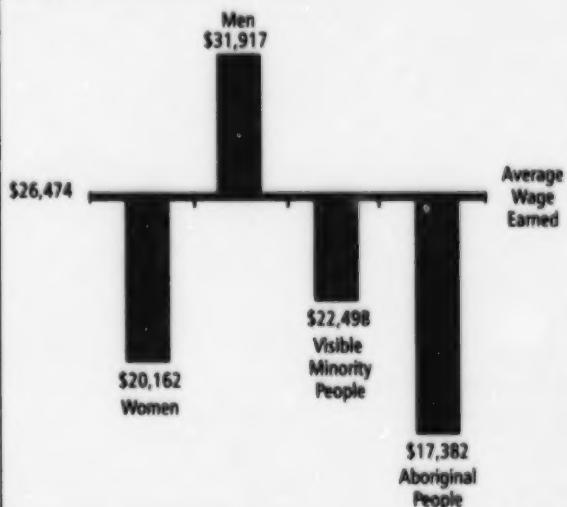
BRITISH COLUMBIA EMPLOYMENT EQUITY OCCUPATIONAL GROUPS 1996 ⁵²			
Occupational Groups	Women %	Aboriginal Women %	Visible Minority Women %
Total Employed	46.7	1.4	7.9
Middle Managers	33.9	0.7	5.2
Semi-Professional & Technicians	46.0	1.5	5.0
Administrative Support & Senior Clerical	83.3	1.8	10.0
Clerical	74.1	1.7	12.1
Other Sales/Service	56.5	2.4	12.5

Employment Income

Overall, employed women in British Columbia earn substantially less than employed men. In 1997, women working full-time, full-year in British Columbia earned an estimated average of \$32,849 or 72.9% of men's earnings.⁵³ The difference is known as the gender "wage gap." Of women working full-time in British Columbia, 13.9% earned \$50,000 or more in 1997, compared with 36.3% of men. Conversely, 20.5% of women earned under \$20,000, compared with 13.9% of men.⁵⁴

To draw comparisons regarding earnings of the visible minority population, the Aboriginal population and the general population, Canada-wide data must be used. In 1995 the average Canadian earned \$26,474 annually. Women's average earnings at \$20,162 fell significantly below the average, while men's average earnings at \$31,917 exceeded it.⁵⁵ Visible minority workers earned \$22,498 or 15% less than the average,⁵⁶ and Aboriginal workers earned \$17,382, or 34% less than the average.⁵⁷

Comparison of Average Earnings, 1995



INCOME 1995 CANADA⁵⁸

	Women and Men	Women	Men	Visible Minority People	Aboriginal People
Average	\$26,474	\$20,162	\$31,917	\$22,498	\$17,382
Average Full-Time/Full-Year	\$37,556	\$30,130	\$42,488	N/A	\$29,684
Average All others	\$15,345	\$12,586	\$18,422	N/A	\$10,866

Women who are Caucasian, and British subjects, can vote in B.C.

Helen Gregory MacGill becomes the first woman judge in British Columbia. She holds the post of judge of Juvenile Court in Vancouver for 28 years.

1915

Helena Gutteridge, Vancouver Trade Union activist, convinces the Vancouver Trades and Labour Council to support equal pay for equal work in their constitution.

1917

Rosa Pryor, a black woman from Vancouver, opens the Chicken Inn after borrowing \$20 for the licence fee from a woman she had met at the race track. The restaurant stays open for 42 years.

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Mary Ellen Smith is the first woman elected to the B.C. legislature and the first woman in the British Empire to become a cabinet minister.

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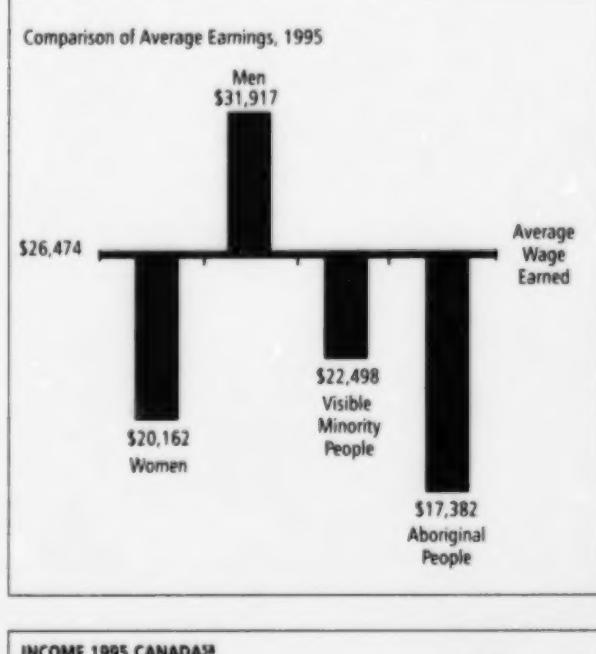
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Semi-Professional & Technicians	46.0	1.5	5.0
Supervisors	55.8	1.1	7.4
Administrative Support & Senior Clerical	83.3	1.8	10.0
Skilled Sales/Services	41.5	1.5	8.2
Clerical	74.1	1.7	12.1
Intermediate Sales/Service	69.2	2.4	11.4
Other Sales/Service	56.5	2.4	12.5

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Impact of Education on Wage Gap

The hourly wage gap between men and women is widespread among individuals of all ages, education levels, occupations and industries. However, it varies for different groups. For example, in 1997, single women who had never been married earned 96.4 cents for every \$1 earned by their male counterparts.⁵⁹ For comparison, women with a university education earned 84.5 cents for every \$1 earned by their counterparts, and women who had less than a high school diploma earned only 69.1 cents for every \$1 earned by their male counterparts.⁶⁰

About half of the overall gender earnings gap can be accounted for by differences between men and women in their wage-determining skills, abilities and attributes. These include level and type of education, work experience, job responsibility, training, tenure, labour market attachment and other productivity related factors.⁶¹ The other half of the wage gap stems from discrimination.⁶² A significant proportion of the wage gap, one-quarter to one-third, is attributed to the historic under-valuation of the work done by women.⁶³

COMPARISON OF WOMEN'S AND MEN'S EARNINGS BY HIGHEST-PAYING AND LOWEST-PAYING OCCUPATIONS, 1995 ⁴⁴		
	Women's Average Earnings	Men's Average Earnings
Lowest-Paying Occupations for Women, 1995		
Babysitters, Nannies & Parents' Helpers	\$12,662	\$15,106
Artisans & Craftspersons	\$13,565	\$20,555
General Farm Workers	\$13,825	\$19,990
Food & Beverage Servers	\$13,861	\$18,192
Harvesting Labourers	\$14,465	\$18,683
Highest-Paying Occupations for Women, 1995		
Judges	\$117,707	\$128,791
Specialist Physicians	\$86,086	\$137,019
General Practitioners & Family Physicians	\$81,512	\$116,750
Dentists	\$71,587	\$109,187
Sr. Managers - Financial, Communications Carriers & other Business Services	\$71,270	\$104,715

Women and the High-Technology Sector

Women composed 14.4% (5,330) of the high-technology labour force in British Columbia in 1996.⁶⁵ Among the industries involved in high technology are electronics and computer manufacturing, information technology, systems analysis and computer programming, chemical manufacturing and bio-technology. Women had the highest representation as computer systems analysts (960 of 5,330) and the lowest as biological technologists (80 of 5,330).⁶⁶

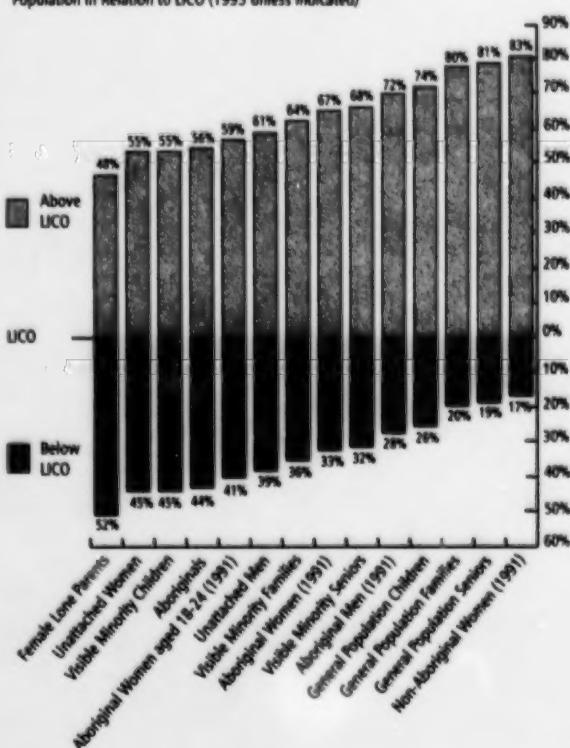
Low Income

Lone-parent families headed by women represent 23% of all families with children living at home and have the lowest incomes of all family types in Canada. In 1995, 52% of female lone parents in B.C. fell below Statistics Canada's Low Income Cut-Off (LICO) line.⁶⁷ LICO indicates the point at which the proportion of personal income spent on food, shelter and clothing is significantly higher than average.⁶⁸

In the same year, 36% of Canada's visible minority families fell into the low-income category, as compared to 20% of the general population.

About 45% of visible minority children under the age of six lived in low-income families, as compared to 26% for all children. For seniors, the rate of low income was 32% for visible minority groups, while the national average was 19%.⁶⁹

Population in Relation to LICO (1995 unless indicated)



Women who are employed in the federal civil service must resign when they marry.

B.C. passes Canada's first maternity leave legislation.

1919

Helena Gutteridge unites labour with women's groups, resulting in the passage of B.C.'s first minimum wage act.

1921

1926

Renovations are complete and the Vancouver Women's Building officially opens. The building houses several women's groups and provides activities to the public.

In 1995, 44% of the Aboriginal population was below LICO.⁷⁰ In 1991, 33% of Canada's Aboriginal women and 41% of Aboriginal women aged 18-24 years lived in low-income situations, compared to 28% of Aboriginal men and 17% of non-Aboriginal women.⁷¹

Overall in Canada, 45% of unattached women live in low-income situations, as compared to 39% of unattached men.⁷²

Unpaid Work

Unpaid work can include household maintenance, childcare, care for other dependent family members such as the elderly and those with disabilities, and volunteer work in the community. In 1992, regardless of marital status or the presence of children, women spent 90 minutes more per day on unpaid work than men. On average, women spend 4.3 hours on unpaid work and 4.8 hours on paid work per day. In comparison, men average 2.7 hours at unpaid work and 6.8 hours at paid work each day. In 1992 in B.C., employed married mothers spent an average of 5.4 hours per day on unpaid work, employed lone-parent mothers spent an average of 3.8 hours per day on unpaid work, and married men spent three hours.⁷³

In 1995, 92% of women spent time doing unpaid housework or maintenance as compared to 85% of men in the week preceding the census. Moreover, in the week preceding the census, 24.4% of B.C. women spent 30 hours or more, in contrast to only 7.9% of men.⁷⁴

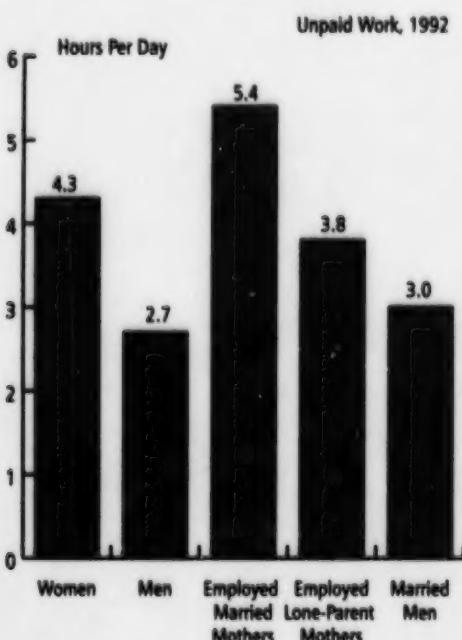
Economic Impact of Marital Breakup

A five-year study of Revenue Canada income tax returns shows that in the year of separation, women experience a median loss of 38% of adjusted family income.⁷⁵ In comparison, men see an immediate 11% net gain.⁷⁶ On separation, women are usually the custodial parent and, in the year of separation, only 35% of women receive support payments from their former spouse.⁷⁷ In the year following separation, women's net family income loss is 23%, while men experience a 10% net gain in income.⁷⁸

Senior Women

In 1997 almost two-thirds of a million people aged 65 and over, or 19% of all seniors in Canada, had incomes below the LICO.⁷⁹ In 1996, nearly one in four (24%) senior women and 32% of visible minority seniors lived in low-income situations.⁸⁰ In 1997 the average income of B.C. women over 65 years was \$17,382, compared to \$27,961 for men.⁸¹

Canada-wide, women over age 65 have a greater dependence on government transfers for their income than do men. Women over 65 obtain 38.1% of their income from Old Age Security, 21.8% from the Canada Pension Plan and 13.2% from retirement pensions. By contrast men over 65 receive 21.2% of their income from Old Age Security, 21.1% from the Canada Pension Plan and 26.5% from retirement pensions.⁸²



Person's Day. On October 18, the British Privy Council ruled that under the British North America Act, the five women who applied for recognition were in fact persons and could be appointed to the senate.

1928

1931

The Supreme Court of Canada rules that the British North America Act does not define women as "persons" and women are therefore not eligible to hold public office.

Waitresses in two restaurants go on strike to oppose a possible 20% cut in pay. Two years later, striking waitresses win a one-year contract, eight-hour workdays and a six-day work week.

1929

Looking Back

Women in the Labour Force

Over the past 100 years, one of the most significant changes for both the Canadian job market and the Canadian household has undoubtedly been the massive entry of women into the paid labour force. From 1901 to 1941, women's participation rate in the paid labour force grew from 12.0% to 20.2%. By 1951, women participated in the labour force at the rate of 23.6%;⁸³ by 1976, 45.7%; and as of 1999, 58.9% of women participate in the paid labour force.⁸⁴

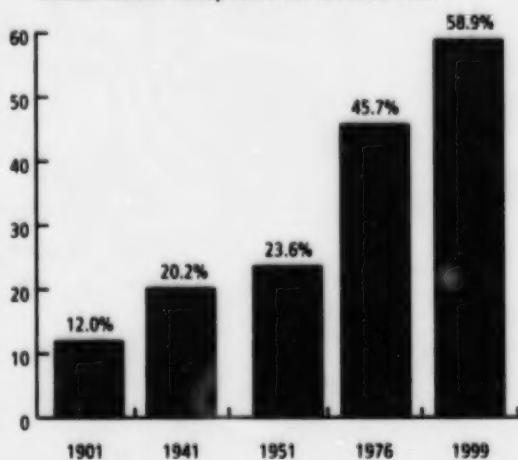
Canadian Women's Participation Rates in the Labour Force⁸⁵

1941	1976	1987	1999 ⁸⁶
20.2%	45.7%	56.3%	58.9%

Participation Rates in the Labour Force of Canadian Women with a Husband/Partner and Children under Three Years of Age

1987	1999 ⁸⁷
57.6%	65.1%

Canadian Women's Participation in the Paid Labour Force



Although women's participation in the paid labour force increased dramatically in the last half of the century and women began to make inroads into non-traditional employment, women continued to remain concentrated in a limited number of lower-paying occupational sectors.⁸⁸ In 1961, women accounted for 96.8% of stenotypists and nurses, 90.5% of sewing machine operators and 88.1% of maids,⁸⁹ while in historically male-dominated professions, women represented just 7% of physicians in

Canada, 3% of lawyers and 21% of professors and college principals.⁹⁰ Patterns of occupational segregation between women and men remain today.⁹¹

PROPORTION OF CANADIAN WOMEN AND MEN IN SELECTED MAJOR OCCUPATION GROUPS⁹²

	1971		1981		1991	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
Total - all occupations	34.3	65.7	40.4	59.6	44.9	55.1
Medicine & Health	74.3	25.7	77.6	22.4	79.1	20.9
Clerical	68.5	31.6	77.7	22.3	78.2	21.8
Teaching	60.4	39.6	59.5	40.5	64.0	36.0
Service	46.2	53.8	52.3	47.7	55.7	44.3
Social Sciences	37.4	62.7	52.5	47.5	61.1	38.9
Sales	30.4	69.6	40.8	59.2	44.9	55.2
Farming, Horticulture & Animal Husbandry	20.9	79.1	5.6	94.4	27.2	72.8
Processing	17.8	82.2	6.8	93.2	25.8	74.2
Religion	15.7	84.3	26.5	73.5	21.5	78.5
Managerial & Administrative	15.7	84.3	24.9	75.2	38.7	61.4
Natural Sciences, Engineering & Mathematics	7.3	92.7	14.1	85.9	20.2	79.8
Machining	5.7	94.3	24.4	75.6	6.3	93.7
Forestry & Logging	2.1	97.9	2.2	97.8	8.3	91.7
Hunting, Fishing & Trapping	1.9	98.1	6.3	93.7	13.2	86.8
Construction Trades	0.9	99.1	6.5	93.5	2.8	97.2
Mining, Oil & Gas	0.6	99.4	22.2	77.8	2.9	97.1

Income and Gender Wage Gap

In British Columbia, between 1981 and 1997, women's earnings as a percentage of men's earnings (full-year, full-time) increased from 61.7% to 72.9%, representing a narrowing of the gender wage gap by 11.2% over 16 years.⁹³

GENDER WAGE GAP FOR FULL-TIME, FULL-YEAR WORKERS, CANADA & B.C.

	Average Earnings, full-year, full-time Canada ⁹⁴ (in constant 1997 dollars)		Earnings Ratio (gender wage gap)	
	Women - \$	Men - \$	Canada	B.C. ⁹⁵
1957	18,725	32,057	58.4	not measured
1977	26,299	42,382	62.1	not measured
1981	26,638	41,793	63.7	61.7
1987	27,761	41,970	66.1	66.4
1997	30,915	42,626	72.5	72.9

A group of female pilots from B.C. form the "flying seven," the first women's aeronautical club in Canada.

1935

Domestic Services Union is formed to get minimum wage, regulated union hiring, training and protective legislation. They had 400 members by 1937.

1936

Helena Gutteridge is the first woman elected to the Vancouver City Council.

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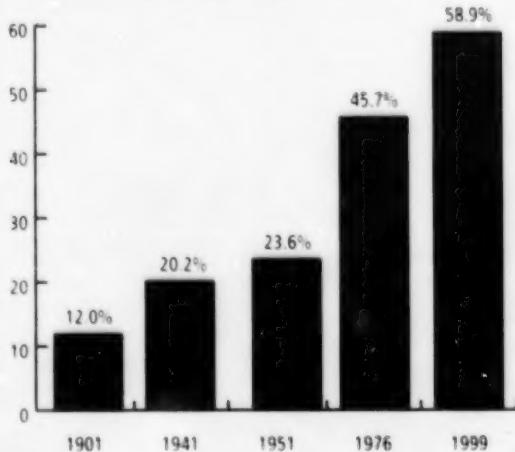
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1901	1941	1951	1976	1981	1987	1994	1999 ⁸⁶
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Social Sciences	37.4	62.7	52.5	47.5	61.1	38.9
Sales	30.4	69.6	40.8	59.2	44.9	55.2
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WOMEN AND EDUCATION

The increase in qualifications required in today's job market means that people with lower educational attainment have fewer job options and face a more vulnerable future. Education and training emerge as critical factors for overcoming unemployment, under-employment and poverty and for attaining economic security and independence.

Accordingly, women have taken advantage of education as a means of bettering their futures. At all levels of education except for doctoral studies, women's representation is higher than that of men. Women continue to be concentrated in traditional fields of study such as social sciences, health and education. Women's representation in more lucrative fields such as engineering and applied science is still low, but has been increasing over the last 20 years. Similarly, although some progress has been made, women continue to make up a small proportion of apprentices for those trades that have not been traditionally pursued by women.

Secondary School

In 1999, 39,012 British Columbia students graduated from secondary school.⁹⁶ The completion rate for all young women was 80%, while the graduation rate for young men was 70%. For Aboriginal youth in 1999, the completion rate was 42.5% for young women and 34.5% for young men.⁹⁷

Community Colleges

In B.C., women's community college enrolments, excluding vocational training, have outpaced that of men since 1974.⁹⁸ In 1996 there were 77,081 students enrolled in B.C. colleges. Women accounted for 52.9% of full-time and 62.0% of part-time enrolments.⁹⁹

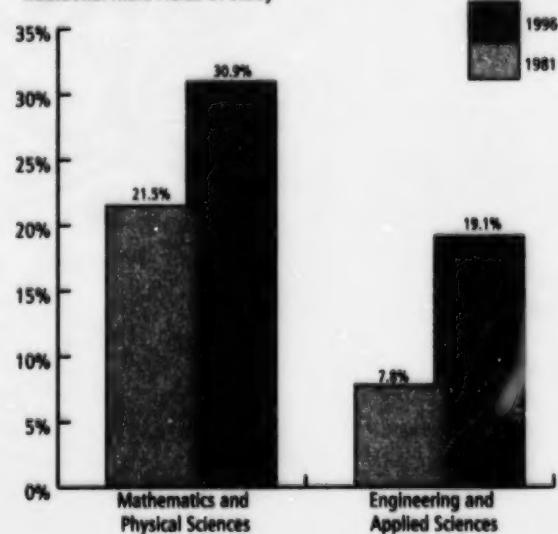
Universities

In B.C. in 1996, women received 57.9% of bachelor's degrees, 53.5% of master's degrees, and 31.3% of doctorate degrees. Clear patterns of "men's specialization" and "women's specialization" are still evident across disciplines. Men make up the majority of students in engineering, applied sciences, mathematics and the physical sciences, whereas women still dominate in the social sciences, education and health fields of study.¹⁰⁰

Field of Study	Men	Women	Total	% Women
Agriculture & Biological Sciences	1,264	1,998	3,262	61.3%
Education	1,343	2,369	3,712	63.8%
Engineering & Applied Sciences	2,786	770	3,556	21.7%
Fine & Applied Arts	389	818	1,207	67.8%
Health Professions	709	1,399	2,108	66.4%
Humanities	1,338	1,789	3,127	57.2%
Mathematics & Physical Sciences	1,514	581	2,095	27.7%
Social Sciences	4,355	5,408	9,763	55.4%
General Art/Sciences	4,969	7,022	11,991	58.6%
Not Reported	304	488	792	61.6%
Grand Total	18,971	22,642	41,613	54.4%

Nevertheless, increasing numbers of women are receiving bachelor's degrees in mathematics and engineering. In 1981, women accounted for 64 of 297 (21.5%) mathematics and physical sciences degrees granted in B.C. By 1996, women accounted for 195 of 632 (30.9%) mathematics and physical sciences degrees granted. Women completed 33 of 421 (7.8%) engineering and applied sciences degrees in 1981, while by 1996 they completed 121 of 632 (19.1%).¹⁰²

Participation of British Columbia Women in Traditional Male Fields of Study



Elsie MacGill of Vancouver becomes the first woman engineer admitted to the Engineering Institute of Canada.

1938

The B.C. Women's Service Corps is founded by Joan Kennedy, who goes on to be the first Canadian woman to attain the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. By 1940 there were 700 members in the Corps. They became the Canadian Women's Army Corp in 1941.

1939

40,000 women are working in war industries in Canada.

1941

Members of visible minority groups account for 68,140 of B.C.'s population of 263,480 (25.9%) who have achieved a bachelor's degree as their highest level of education. Aboriginal students account for 1,970 or 0.7%.¹⁰³ Members of visible minority groups account for 16,310 of 53,340 (30.6%) who have studied engineering, and 12,435 of 37,790 (32.9%) who have studied mathematics and physical sciences. Aboriginal people represent 370 of 53,340 (0.7%) whose major field of study is engineering, and 205 of 37,790 (0.5%) who have studied mathematics and physical sciences.¹⁰⁴

Apprenticeship

While work-based or apprenticeship training has a long tradition in the skilled trades sector, apprenticeship positions have been almost exclusively held by men in British Columbia. Women's participation has been historically very low in all apprenticeable trades and occupations in B.C. As late as 1995, women made up 4.9% of the enrolments in apprenticeship programs.¹⁰⁵ More recently there has been progress.

In 1999 there were 13,810 registered apprentices in British Columbia, of which 7.3% were women,¹⁰⁶ up from 5% in 1993. Of the 138 post-secondary

TOP TEN APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMS FOR WOMEN, B.C., 1999¹⁰⁷

Apprenticeship Program	Total Registered	Women Registered	% Women
Electrician	1,770	55	3.1%
Carpenter	1,599	38	2.4%
Cook	858	172	20.1%
Hairdresser	339	274	80.8%
Set Dresser (Motion Picture)	144	58	40.3%
Landscape/Horticulturist	79	29	36.7%
Baker	75	25	33.3%
Food and Beverage Server	74	58	78.4%
Third Assistant Director	60	34	56.7%
Barber	59	43	72.9%

trades training programs in B.C., 71 (51.4%) had no women enrolled.¹⁰⁷ Women make up 14% of all entry-level trades trainees, while members of a visible minority group represent 18%, and Aboriginal people represent 3.6%.¹⁰⁸ Sixty percent of women students were over 30 years of age.¹⁰⁹

Looking Back

Evolution of Women's Education

Throughout most of the 1800s, girls and boys attended segregated schools in most Canadian cities. Co-education became more common in the 1900s as school enrolment for girls was increased. Girls were streamed into courses such as home economics and business support, while boys studied academics, trades and industrial arts. Black and other minority women were directed to home economics in preparation for life as domestic helpers. First Nations children were taken from their family homes and placed in residential Christian schools. People with disabilities were not educated within the system.

Gradually, some seminary schools evolved into women's colleges. However, women's and men's areas of specialization were already clear: men received bachelor's degrees in diverse academic fields of study, while women were limited to "Mistress" degrees in such faculties as music and art instruction.

In the mid 1960s most young girls still aspired to traditional careers: teaching, nursing, secretarial or motherhood.¹¹¹ Throughout the 1970s women were pursuing a university education in ever-increasing numbers, with women making up 37% of the university student population. By 1990, more than 50% of students in Canadian universities were women. Although women made significant inroads into historically male-dominated fields such as medicine and law in the 1980s and 1990s, they made much less progress in the natural sciences and engineering.¹¹²

FULL-TIME UNIVERSITY ENROLMENT - IN CANADA¹¹³

Year	Total #	Undergraduate degrees		Graduate degrees		
		Men	Women	Total #	Men	Women
1925	24,852	78.8%	21.2%	846	73.9%	26.1%
1950	64,036	78.3%	21.6%	4,559	84.6%	15.4%
1975	330,954	57.6%	42.4%	40,108	71.0%	29.0%

CANADA, FULL-TIME UNIVERSITY UNDERGRADUATE ENROLMENT, BY FIELD OF SPECIALIZATION¹¹⁴

SPECIALIZATION	1925		1950		1975	
	% Men	% Women	% Men	% Women	% Men	% Women
Arts & Science	69.0	31.0	72.5	27.5	55.5	44.4
Commerce & Business Admin.	92.0	8.0	90.3	9.7	77.7	22.3
Education	32.4	67.6	57.6	42.4	38.1	61.9
Engineering & Applied Science	99.9	0.1	99.5	0.5	94.5	5.5
Fine & Applied Arts	—	—	26.0	74.0	39.2	60.8
Law	97.5	2.5	96.0	4.0	73.3	26.7
Medicine	95.7	4.3	93.8	6.2	72.8	27.2
Nursing	0	100	0	100	2.7	97.3

All Aboriginal and Japanese-Canadian people in B.C., including women, are granted the right to vote in provincial elections.

Nancy Hodges is the first woman speaker in the B.C. legislature and the Commonwealth.

1947

Chinese-Canadian and South Asian-Canadian women and men are permitted to vote in B.C.

1949

1955

Once married, women are now able to keep their jobs in the federal civil service.

Margaret Gee is the first Chinese-Canadian woman to earn a law degree from UBC and to be admitted to the legal society in B.C.

WOMEN AND FAMILIES

The Canadian family has undergone tremendous change over the past century as it has adapted to changing social and economic conditions. Today's family may include extended family members, biological, adopted and stepchildren, same-sex parents, young and older parents, single-parent households or childless households - from a diverse range of ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Roles and responsibilities within the family have also shifted. So while the Canadian family has changed, it is still defined and unified by the concepts of community, diversity, and nurturing.

Family Size, Composition and Membership

In 1996 there were 1,008,440 families with children in B.C. Of these, 60.8% had children living at home. The average family size is 3.0 people. Single-parent families make up 23% of all families with children living at home,¹¹⁵ and 82.8% of these families are headed by a woman.¹¹⁶ One in five children in B.C. lives in a single-parent family. Two-parent families have an average of 1.9 children at home compared to 1.6 children in single-parent families.¹¹⁷

It is a continuing trend that at some point in their lives most women will live with a partner or other companion. In 1996, 1,763,225 British Columbians were either married or living common law.¹¹⁸ This represents 58.9% of the population over 15 years old.¹¹⁹ There were 21,749 marriages registered in 1998. About one out of four (25.9%) of the individuals getting married had previously been divorced.¹²⁰

Women as Caregivers

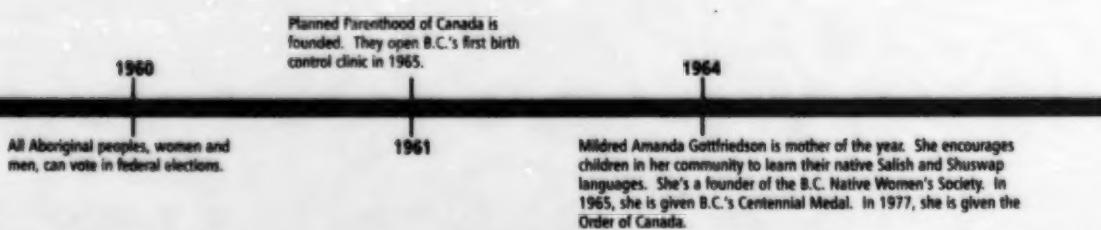
Women continue to assume the major responsibility for the care of children, elderly parents and other dependents. In 1996 caregiving assistance to people with long-term health problems was provided by 14% of Canadian women and 10% of men. Almost half (47%) of elder-care assistance is provided to parents and parents-in-law, 24% is provided to friends, 13% is provided to extended family members, and 5% is provided to spouses.¹²¹ There is a concentration of caregivers in the 45 to 64 age group for women (19%). Women aged 45 to 64 may carry the heaviest responsibilities, as they often provide childcare and elder-care at the same time as having the primary responsibility for the household and being employed outside the home.

Women, Family and Work

B.C. women in 1999 constitute almost half (46.5%) of the paid labour force,¹²² and increasingly, mothers with young children are participating in the paid labour force. In 1999, 59.2% of all women in B.C. and 78.7% of women between the ages of 25 and 44 were in the labour force.¹²³ The labour force participation rate of women in B.C. with a partner/husband and children under three years of age rose from 61.0% in 1994 to 67.9% in 1999.¹²⁴

Family and Income

Changes in family structure have affected family incomes. Overall, the number of Canadian families increased 7% between the 1991 and 1996 censuses. However, the rate of increase in single-parent families (+19%) was almost four times the rate of increase in husband-wife families (+5%). Average incomes declined in almost all types of families between 1990 and 1995. In those five years, the average income of husband and wife families decreased 4%, while the income of single-parent families declined 8%. The incidence of low income among families increased from 13% in 1990 to 16% in 1995. The rate was highest among single-parent families, Aboriginal people and the visible minority population.¹²⁵



Looking Back

The Changing Canadian Family

While marriage rates have declined (from 9.3 per 1,000 population in 1971 to 6.3 per 1,000 population in 1995¹²⁶), more couples are choosing to live in common-law relationships and there are more lone-parent families.¹²⁷

Family Structure in British Columbia	1981 %	1991 %	1995 %
Married couples	82.1	78.3	76.6
Single-parent families	10.8	12.1	12.1
Common-law couples	7.0	9.6	11.3

More people are getting divorced, but less so than 5 or 15 years ago.¹²⁸

Divorces in British Columbia	1968 (per 100,000 population)	1980	1985	1990	1995
	110.8	358.5	278.6	296.1	280.0

Since the early 1990s, a number of legislative changes have been made in B.C. to expand the definition of spouse and recognize the rights of same-sex couples with respect to wills, estates, inheritance, adoption, child and spousal support, custody, division of property, pension benefits for public sector employees and making decisions on behalf of a partner who is incapacitated.

Traditionally, the responsibility for meeting families' material and emotional needs was divided along gender lines. Men were seen as the main economic providers, whereas women were the primary nurturers. As women join or return to the paid labour force in increasing numbers, these traditional roles within the family are being challenged.

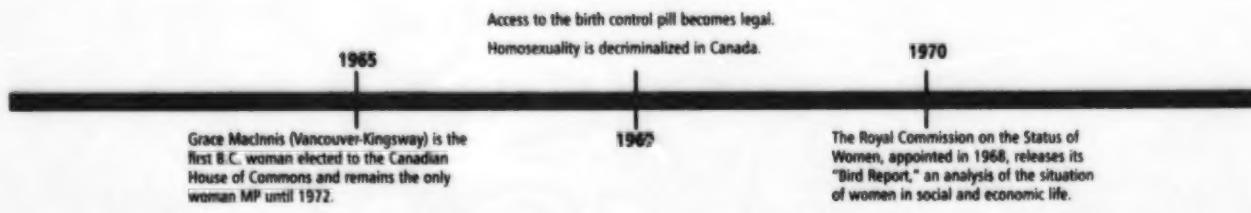
While there may be nostalgia for the "Canadian family of the past," idealistic notions of its stability and strength may be misplaced. Family instability was common, most often caused by the death of a father with

dependents but also resulting from poverty and the need to send children away to work at a very young age. Children were born outside of marriage. Pre-marital and extramarital relationships, incest, alcoholism, wife battering and child abuse occurred, even though they were seldom spoken about. Oftentimes, family members were left without support. Marriage was virtually compulsory for women, with religious vocations serving as the only real alternative. For wage workers in Canada's early industrial economy, children were seen either as sources of cheap labour or as drains on the family's resources. Women of all classes were legally considered to be possessions of their husbands.¹²⁹

Family size was considerably smaller a century ago than people imagine, largely due to the high rates of infant mortality. While statistics are not available for the average size of families in the 1880s, we know that in 1921, there were an average of 4.3 persons per family, compared to 3.8 in 1956, 3.5 in 1976 and 3.0 in 1996.¹³⁰

From the mid-1800s and through to the late 1970s, most immigrants to B.C. were of British or European origin. Since 1979, Asian countries have accounted for the majority (77% in 1995) of new immigrants to the province.¹³¹ Immigrants to B.C. are more likely than Canadian-born individuals to live with their immediate family. In 1991, 86% of all immigrants aged 15 to 64 in B.C. lived with their immediate family, compared with 80% of those born in Canada.¹³²

Despite changes and greater diversity in the patterns of Canadian family formation and function, one important constant remains: Canadians continue to value family as the primary provider of economic support, provider of care of family members, and transmitter of values and culture. How "family" is defined is important. The definition has implications for tax policy, employment benefits, pensions, property rights, education, housing, health care, childcare, child welfare, child custody matters and individual needs for security, safety and privacy. Equally important is how society can pull together to best support healthy families of the future.



WOMEN AND HOUSING

Safe, affordable and accessible housing is central to the health and well-being of individuals and families. Housing helps to provide a sense of place, a sense of dignity and a sense of community.

For many senior women and individuals with special needs, supportive living environments and affordable housing options are key to independent living. For many other women with low and moderate incomes, and for Aboriginal families, individuals living on their own and single-parent families, an affordable home with adequate space in a safe community can be a critical factor in their quality of life, well-being and ability to provide for their families.

In British Columbia the majority of families own their home. In 1996, 75% of all single-family households in the province were homeowners. This figure, however, is down from a high of 78% in 1992. Two-spouse households are by far the most likely family units in B.C. to own their own home. In 1995, 77% of those households with children and 78% of those without children owned their home, compared with only 39% of single-parent households.¹³³

PRIVATE HOUSEHOLDS BY TENURE, (1996 CENSUS)¹³⁴

Households	Men	Women
Own their home (%)	70.6	29.4
Renter households (%)	54.7	45.3
% of all Indian band housing	54.8	45.1

Almost 30% of British Columbians have housing affordability problems. Households are considered to have affordability problems if more than 30% of household income is spent on housing costs. Renters are more likely to spend 30% or more of their household income on housing than are homeowners.¹³⁵

In 1995 approximately 25% of all single-family households and 61% of families headed by single parents in British Columbia rented their living accommodations.¹³⁶ More than half of the rental households with incomes of less than \$20,000 are headed by women.

Total Income	Total #	Male-headed	Female-headed	Single Parents
Total	491,540	55%	45%	14%
<\$20,000	185,735	44%	56%	19%
\$20,000-\$29,999	80,530	53%	47%	16%
\$30,000-\$39,999	67,900	57%	43%	12%
\$40,000-\$49,999	52,015	64%	36%	10%
\$50,000+	105,355	68%	32%	7%

Between 1981 and 1996, the living arrangements of seniors in B.C. shifted, with a larger proportion of seniors still living with a spouse or living alone. In 1996, 45% of all seniors aged 75 and over still lived with a spouse, compared to 39% in 1981. This is most likely due to a decrease in the life expectancy gap between women and men, and healthier lifestyles. The proportion of elderly, 75 years and over, living in collective dwellings¹³⁸ has also decreased over the past 15 years, with the ratio of men decreasing from 14% in 1981 to 8% in 1996 and women from 20% to 14%. One reason for this may be the prevalence of "independent living" dwellings, which provide independent apartment living with common dining facilities.¹³⁹



WOMEN IN POSITIONS OF INFLUENCE

Women's struggles to achieve the rights and benefits of full and equal participation in all aspects of social, political and economic life are well documented. Over the last 30 years many barriers and injustices have diminished, and women's representation in positions of influence has increased. However, women's access to decision-making structures and processes remains a challenge, particularly in some sectors.

Public Officials

Currently, Canada has 301 federal Members of Parliament (MPs), including 34 representatives from British Columbia. Of the 34 MPs, four are women (11.8%) and two of these (6%) are visible minority women. Of Canada's 105 senators, there are 32 women, one of whom is a member of a visible minority group. British Columbia has one woman representative in the Canadian Senate.¹⁴⁰ Women make up 22 out of 75 (29.3%) Members of the Legislative Assembly for B.C. (MLAs), three of whom are members of a visible minority group. Of the 153 mayors in British Columbia, 33 or 21.6% are women as of November 1999.¹⁴¹ Canada's 26th Governor General is also a woman.

PUBLIC OFFICIALS, 1999			
Position	Total	Women	Percentage
Governor General	1	1	100.0%
MPs	301	60	19.9%
BC MPs	34	4	11.8%
Senators	105	32	30.5%
BC Senators	6	1	16.7%
BC MLAs	75	22	29.3%
BC Mayors	153	33	21.6%

Women in Aboriginal Government

There are 197 Indian bands in British Columbia. Women serve as chief for 19.3% of bands (38 of 188 bands reporting) and constitute 32.5% of band councillors (276 of 848).¹⁴² Chiefs may be elected under the federal Indian Act or chosen under other traditional cultural practices.

British Columbia Senior Government Officials

Women are increasingly occupying senior-level positions in the B.C. public service. In 1991, 10.9% of senior managers were women.¹⁴³ By 1999, women held 32.2% senior management positions (39 of 121). The percentage of women deputy ministers rose from 12.0% in 1991 (3 of 25), to 34.1% in 1999 (14 of 41).¹⁴⁴

Agencies, Boards and Commissions

In 1999 there were 3,228 appointees to British Columbia's various agencies, boards and commissions. Women's representation on these boards increased from 25% in 1991 to nearly 42.1% in 1999 (1,360 of 3228). Of the 399 chair and vice-chair positions, women occupied 33.8% (135).¹⁴⁵

Health Authorities

In 1999, women held 52.4% of the positions on British Columbia Regional Health Authorities and Community Health Boards (275 of 525). Women represented 48.7% of members of Regional Health Boards (73 of 150), 53.9% of members of Community Health Councils (202 of 375), and 50.0% of members of Community Health Services Societies (27 to 54).¹⁴⁶

Public Schools Administration

From 1989 to 1998 the representation of women as school principals in B.C. increased from 17.7% to 31.4%.¹⁴⁷ Over the same period, the representation of women amongst B.C.'s vice-principals increased from 25.5% to 41.4%.¹⁴⁸ Members of visible minority groups represent 3% of school principals. In 1999, women accounted for 15.0% of School District Superintendents (9 of 60).¹⁴⁹

Kathleen Shannon of B.C. founds "Studio D", at the National Film Board. This is the first and only publicly funded feminist filmmaking unit in the world.

1974

Mary Leonard becomes B.C.'s first elected woman Indian band chief, leading the Kamloops Indian band from 1974 to 1984.

The federal average wage for women is 60% of the wage for men.

1975

1976

Angie Todd-Dennis, a member of the Fort St. James Necatl Band, founds Kumtukas, the first native alternative school, in Vancouver.

University and College Faculties

The percentage of women full-time educators at B.C. post-secondary institutions increased from 28.6% to 35.0% (2,872 of 8,201) in 1996-97 from the previous year. The increase of university women educators was minimal, up to 24.7% (826 of 3,349) from 23.9% in the previous year. At the community colleges, there was a 10% increase, from 34.2% (970 of 2,833) to 42.2% (2,046 of 4,852), of women full-time educators.¹⁵⁰

Of B.C.'s university professors, 12.8% (780 of 6,095) are members of a visible minority group. In 1996, representatives of visible minority groups made up 28.6% (1,450 of 5,075) and Aboriginal persons 2.3% (115 of 5,075) of B.C. post-secondary teachers.¹⁵¹

Justice Professionals

Of registered lawyers in B.C. (including those who are practising, non-practising and retired) 30.2 % are women (3,023 of 10,010). Of practising lawyers in B.C., 28.3% are women (2,453 of 8,677).¹⁵² In 1999, women accounted for 24.2% of Supreme Court of British Columbia judges (24 of 99) and 15.4% of Masters of the Supreme Court (2 of 13). Women made up 44.4% of the Justices of the Court of Appeal for British Columbia (8 of 18).¹⁵³

Visible minority justice officials in B.C. composed 3.2% of judges (10 of 315), and 7.4% of lawyers (625 of 8,435).¹⁵⁴ Aboriginal persons in B.C. represent 4.8% of judges (15 of 315) and 1.5% of lawyers (130 of 8,435).¹⁵⁵

Three of nine justices in the Supreme Court of Canada are women, one of whom is the Chief Justice of Canada.



1977

The United Nations formally declares March 8th International Women's Day.

The National Association of Indian Rights for Indian Women is formed by Rose Charlie of the Sto:lo Nation to challenge the discriminatory sections of the Indian Act.

Judy Cameron is hired by Air Canada as their first woman pilot.

1978

1979

The Family Relations Act is amended to ensure that each spouse becomes entitled to a half-interest in property

The United Nations Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women is unanimously adopted by the General Assembly.

Women's Security and Well-being

WOMEN AND HEALTH



Women's health and wellness needs differ from men's for a number of reasons. The most obvious one is their childbearing responsibilities. Additionally, women live longer than men, suffer more ill health than men, and have a greater incidence of disabilities and chronic illnesses.¹⁵⁶

According to the Provincial Health Officer, there is strong evidence that higher income and social status are linked to better health, while lower income and lower social status are associated with poorer health.¹⁵⁷ Similarly, Statistics Canada reports that there is a strong association between income, other health determinants, and health status. For example, Canadians with the lowest income are five times more likely than those from the highest income groups to report their health as only fair to poor. They are twice as likely to have a long-term activity limitation. And they are only one-third as likely to have dental insurance.¹⁵⁸ As women's incomes are lower than men's and women are more likely than men to live in poverty, this has serious implications for women's health.

Birth

Currently in British Columbia the birthrate is 10.7 per 1,000 population, the lowest birthrate in the post-war period.¹⁵⁹ This translates into 42,909 live births in B.C. in 1998.¹⁶⁰ In 1998 the average age of B.C. women giving birth was 29.0 years.¹⁶¹ While women aged 25 to 29 years remained the largest group of first-time mothers (31.6%) in 1998, there were more first births to women 30 to 34 years (25.1%) than to women in the younger age group of 20-24 years of age (23.0%).¹⁶² However, women of South Asian descent are more likely to become mothers at a younger age than is the provincial norm, as 75% of South Asian mothers have had their first child by the age of 30, compared to 61% of B.C. mothers overall.¹⁶³ For women of Chinese descent, approximately 48% have had their first child by age 30.¹⁶⁴ In the case of Aboriginal women, births to women under the age of 30 represented 76.2% of all births to Status Indians in B.C. in 1997.¹⁶⁵

Death

In 1998, women's life expectancy at birth was 81.6 years as compared to 76.0 years for men.¹⁶⁶ In 1998, a total of 27,790 British Columbia residents died; of this number, 13,294 were women (47.8%) and 14,496 were men (52.2%).¹⁶⁷ Heart disease ranks as the number one cause of death for women, claiming the lives of 2,107 women in British Columbia in 1998, followed by cerebrovascular disease (1,371) and then lung cancer (913).¹⁶⁸

Leading cause of death varies by age. For women aged 25 to 84, the number one cause of death is cancer, accounting for 35.7% of deaths in this age group.¹⁶⁹ While lung cancer is the most common cause of cancer deaths among

women (913 women died of lung cancer in 1998), breast cancer is second with 594 deaths.¹⁷⁰ For women aged 85 and older, cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death, accounting for 33.8% of deaths for women in this age group. Accidents account for 1.6% of deaths overall for women, but are the leading cause for one-to 24-year-old girls and women, at 40.9% (33.3% of girls aged 1-14 years and 44.0% of women aged 15 - 24 years).¹⁷¹

LEADING CAUSE OF DEATH FOR WOMEN IN BRITISH COLUMBIA, 1998

Age Group	Total Number of Deaths	Leading Cause	Number of Deaths	Percentage
1 - 24	105	Accidents	43	40.9%
25 - 84	8,390	Cancer	2,995	35.7%
85 - older	4,724	Cardiovascular Disease	1,597	33.8%

In comparison, accidents are the leading cause of death for boys and men aged one to 44 years (40.1%). Cancer is the leading cause for men aged 45 to 84 (32.6%). As with women, cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death for men aged 85 and older (32.6%).¹⁷²

TOP TEN CAUSES OF DEATH BY GENDER IN B.C., 1998¹⁷³

Cause of Death	Men	Women
Ischaemic heart disease	18.7%	15.8%
Cerebrovascular disease	6.4%	10.3%
Lung Cancer	7.6%	6.9%
Pneumonia and influenza	4.6%	5.7%
Chronic airways obstruction	3.7%	2.9%
Heart failure	2.0%	3.4%
Intestinal and Rectal Cancer	2.3%	2.3%
Diabetes mellitus	2.2%	2.2%
Female Breast Cancer	0.0%	4.5%
Senile and Presenile dementia	1.2%	2.7%
Total Number of Deaths	14,496	13,294

More South Asians died of causes related to the circulatory system (i.e., heart disease), at a proportion of 45%, than the general population (40%). By contrast, Asians tend to have lower mortality rates from diseases of the circulatory system (38%) than the general population (23%).¹⁷⁴

External causes of death claimed a higher proportion of South Asians (12%)¹⁷⁵ and Aboriginals (28%),¹⁷⁶ and a lower proportion of Asians (7.4%)¹⁷⁷ than the provincial average (8.1%). See chart "Causes of Death by Ethnicity for British Columbia" on page 18.

The Vancouver Society of Immigrant and Visible Minority Women is founded.

SCWIST (Society of Canadian Women in Science and Technology) is formed in Vancouver to encourage girls to continue in science programs.

1980

Marcia Braundy is the first woman to join the B.C. Carpenters Union.

1981

1983

Jeanne Sauve is appointed the first female Governor General.

CAUSES OF DEATH BY ETHNICITY FOR BRITISH COLUMBIA				
Cause of Death	South Asian Population ¹⁷⁵	Asian Population ¹⁷⁶	Aboriginal Population ¹⁸⁰	General Population
Death related to circulatory diseases	44.5%	37.7%	23.0%	40.0%
Death related to cancer	17.2%	30.8%	13.9%	26.6%
Death related to diabetes	4.0%	3.2%	1.6%	1.7%
External causes of death	12.5%	7.4%	27.9%	8.1%
Suicide rate	3.9%	1.6%	5.7%	1.9%

Note: The above table is based on a compilation of more than one data source.
Gendered data for those of Asian and South Asian descent are not available.

Reproductive Health

The most common surgery performed on women is Cesarean sections. In British Columbia, only 7% of births were by Cesarean in 1970, but by 1998 this had risen to 22.1%.¹⁸¹

Hysterectomies are the second most common major surgery in Canada after Cesarean sections, with the percentage performed in B.C. being slightly higher than in Canada. In 1997, women living in northern B.C. were three times more likely than women living in the southern metropolitan areas of British Columbia to have hysterectomies.¹⁸²

AIDS/HIV

In 1998 Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome/Human Immunodeficiency Virus, commonly known as AIDS/HIV ranked 44th out of fifty leading causes of death in British Columbia. While 126 women in B.C. died from AIDS or HIV-related causes (5.4% of total deaths) between 1987 and 1998,¹⁸³ women now make up nearly 20% of new HIV cases.¹⁸⁴ In 1996, 56 Aboriginal women were infected with HIV viruses as compared to 111 non-Aboriginal women.¹⁸⁵ Major risk factors for women include unprotected sexual intercourse with an infected partner; working in the sex trade industry, and injection drug use (with shared intravenous needles). Of great concern is the risk of children being exposed to the virus through pregnancy.¹⁸⁶

Mental Illness

At any given time, 20-30% of the general population may be affected by broadly defined mental illnesses ranging from anxiety to severe depression.¹⁸⁷ Approximately 60% of clients seen in mental health centres are women.¹⁸⁸

Women are more likely than men to experience both depression and anxiety and to seek mental health services for these disorders. Women from households with low incomes are more likely to report depression than are those from high-income households.¹⁸⁹

An estimated 5% of the population suffer from a serious and persistent mental illness such as schizophrenia, manic-depressive illness, major depression or organic brain disorders.¹⁹⁰ In B.C., 2% of women are diagnosed with depression - double the rate of men.¹⁹¹ More women than men are hospitalized for mental illness in acute care hospitals, with a longer average length of stay. In 1995 the average length of stay was 15 days for women and 12 days for men.¹⁹²

Body Image

Body image refers to an individual's perception of his or her body. It is influenced by many factors, including self-esteem; feedback from others; advertising images; and physical changes such as puberty. The 1999 McCreary Report *Healthy Connections: Listening to B.C. Youth* found that weight and body shape play a major role in how B.C. youth feel about themselves. Many B.C. students report dissatisfaction with their current weight status. However, boys and girls differed with respect to how they would prefer to alter their current weight status.

While women and men can experience problems with body image, weight and eating disorders at every age and at all socio-economic levels, women are 10 times more likely than

B.C. YOUTH - % WANTING TO ALTER CURRENT WEIGHT STATUS ¹⁹³		
Weight Status	Girls	Boys
Want to lose weight	52%	19%
Want to gain weight	4%	27%
Want to stay the same	14%	11%
Want to do nothing	31%	43%

men to develop an eating disorder. The number of women with eating disorders is not known precisely, and studies have shown a considerable range in rates, indicating that between 1% and 5% of all women may be severely affected.¹⁹⁴

Drugs and Alcohol

Canadian women over the age of 20 years have increased their alcohol consumption by 20% from 1989 to 1995.¹⁹⁵ In 1998, women accounted for 464 of 1,892 (24.5%) deaths directly related to alcohol in British Columbia.¹⁹⁶

Joan Meister chairs the DisAbled Women's Network B.C. Run by disabled women for disabled women, DAWN is the only organization of its kind in North America. —————— 1985

Shirley Carr is the first woman president of the Canadian Labour Congress.

1988

The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms legally entrenches women's equality.

1986

The Supreme Court of Canada strikes down existing legislation against abortion as unconstitutional.

About 10% of women are estimated to have a drug or alcohol problem of mild to high severity.¹⁹⁷ Over half of women admitted for alcohol and drug services report having experienced sexual abuse, 69% have experienced physical abuse, and 93% have experienced emotional abuse.¹⁹⁸

In British Columbia schools, 40% of young women in grades 8 to 12 report having used marijuana at least once, up from 25% in 1992.¹⁹⁹ Seven per cent of all students report having tried cocaine, up from 5% in 1992, and 16% report trying other illegal drugs.²⁰⁰

Drug-induced deaths, including drug dependence, accidental poisonings and suicide, accounted for 138 or 1.0% of all deaths for women in 1998, or 26.1% of all drug-induced deaths in B.C.²⁰¹

Smoking

About 22% of B.C. residents over the age of 12 are cigarette smokers, 30% are former smokers, while 48% have never smoked.²⁰² Men and women are almost equally likely to be smokers (23% vs. 21%); however, men are more likely than women to be former smokers (32% vs. 27%).²⁰³ Cigarette smoking decreases with age. Only 14% of Canadians over the age of 55 are current smokers.²⁰⁴

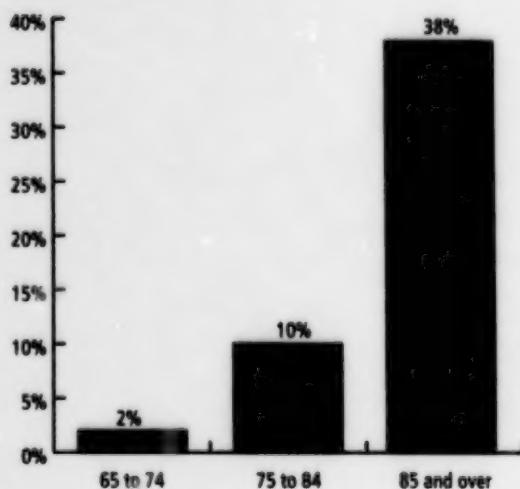
About 21% of young women aged 12 - 19 are current smokers. Teens born outside Canada are less likely to be current smokers than those born in Canada (13% vs. 21%).²⁰⁵ In British Columbia, 8% of smokers aged 12 - 19 report using tobacco to control their weight or to stay slim.²⁰⁶

The effects of smoking for women are significant. There is some evidence that women are two to three times more susceptible to the cancer-causing effects of tobacco smoke than men.²⁰⁷ In 1998 smoking was considered to have been a significant factor in causing the deaths of B.C. women. Smoking was a contributing factor in 39.2% of women's deaths due to cancers, 34.3% of deaths due to circulatory diseases, and 26.5% of deaths due to respiratory system diseases.²⁰⁸

Women and Aging

In 1999, women over 65 years of age represented 14.3% of the provincial population or 519,300.²⁰⁹ In British Columbia, only 5.4% of the population over age 65 live in an institution. Across Canada, senior women are more likely than their male contemporaries to live in an institution. In 1996, 9% of women aged 65 and over were residents in an institution, as compared with 5% of men. Women in older age ranges are the most likely seniors to live in an institution. In 1996, 38% of women aged 85 and over, compared with 10% of women aged 75 to 84 and 2% of those aged 65 to 74, were in an institution.²¹⁰

Women Living in an Institution, 1996



Women are more likely than men to develop osteoarthritis or osteoporosis. Approximately 20% of women aged 25 and older suffer from arthritis, compared to 10% of men.²¹¹ The prevalence increases with age, as almost half of women aged 75 and over experience arthritis. One in four women over the age of 50 and one in two women over 70 will develop osteoporosis.²¹²

More older women (24%) than older men (16%) are prescribed tranquilizers and sleeping pills.²¹³ The number of benzodiazepine prescriptions, a common sedative, filled in 1997 surpassed all other paid Pharmacare prescriptions for women by at least 50,000, exceeding cardiac drugs, antidepressants and even estrogen. Of the benzodiazepine prescriptions filled in 1997, approximately 65% went to women.²¹⁴

Looking Back

Women in Medicine

In the 1800s, women relied on common household supplies, herbs and plants to keep families healthy. It was 1875 before the first woman in Canada was licensed to practise medicine. By 1911, records indicate there were 196 female doctors, 7,215 male doctors and 5,500 nurses across Canada.²¹⁵ In British Columbia in 1996, women represented 2,140 of 7,965 physicians, and 58,580 of 61,885 nurses.

Fourteen women engineering students are massacred in Montreal at L'Ecole Polytechnique.

1989

Promotion Plus, the B.C. Organization for Girls and Women in Sport, is formed in Vancouver.

1991

Beverly McLaughlin is the first woman from B.C. to be sworn in as a Supreme Court Justice. In the same year, women make up 35% of the first-year students in UBC law school, up from 20% in 1973.

1990

Rita Johnston is B.C.'s first woman Premier. The B.C. Ministry of Women's Equality is established.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

The 1993 Statistics Canada National Violence Against Women Survey still provides Canada's only comprehensive information on women's self-reported experience of violence. A key finding of this study was the significant under-reporting of sexual and physical assaults to the police.²¹⁶ Overall, women reported only 14% of assaults to police, with wife assaults being reported to police at the rate of 26%.²¹⁷

Of all provinces in Canada, British Columbia had the highest number of women reporting at least one incident of physical or sexual violence since they were 16 years old (59%).²¹⁸ It is estimated that violence against women costs British Columbians about \$385 million per year in direct costs alone, such as policing and transition house costs.²¹⁹

Violence in Relationships

There is no *Criminal Code* offence known as spousal assault; rather, the determination that an offence is a spousal assault is based on the finding that an offence occurred against a spouse. The reporting of spousal assault offences in British Columbia is supported by the provincial government's *Violence Against Women in Relationships Policy*. The policy defines spouse as a marital partner, a common-law partner or a partner in a dating or intimate relationship. Spousal assault includes assaults between partners in same-sex relationships.

In 1998 there were 9,535 incidents of spousal assault reported to police in British Columbia, resulting in 7,754 charges laid, and 3,485 convictions.²²⁰ In 1998, 80.4% of spousal assault incidents involved a male offender, 10.8% involved a female offender and 8.8% involved both spouses assaulting each other. These proportions have remained about the same since 1993.²²¹

In British Columbia, between 1993 and 1998, 21 women were killed by their male partner; four men were killed by their female partner.²²²

Characteristics of a Typical Spousal Assault

According to information collected in a 1995 survey by the British Columbia Ministry of Attorney General, 90% of spousal assault victims - 407 of 450 people surveyed - are women, and 40% are between 25 and 35 years of age.²²³ Only 6% of female spousal assault victims were 46 years or older.²²⁴ The accused is also most likely to be between 25 and 35 years of age

(46%); 31% were between 36 and 45 years, 11% were under 25 years and 10% were 46 years or older.²²⁵

The majority of spousal assaults are Level 1 assaults (60%).²²⁶ Level 1 assaults are the least serious of non-sexual offences and do not involve a weapon, nor do they result in serious physical harm. More than two-thirds of those charged have a prior criminal record and half of those records are for a previous violent offence.²²⁷ Just over half (53%) of all spousal assault incidents are alcohol-related.²²⁸

Spousal Assault Trends

In B.C. between 1993 and 1998, the total number of reported spousal assault incidents fluctuated from a low of 9,200 reported in 1993 to a high of 10,000 in 1997. The spousal assault rate (number of spousal assaults per 1,000 population) has remained relatively stable during this period, averaging approximately 2.5 spousal assaults per 1,000 population.²²⁹ In 1998 this rate fell to 2.34 per 1000 population, the lowest rate in six years.²³⁰

Poverty and Crime

According to 1993 Canada-wide data, those living in households with incomes less than \$15,000 per year, experience a personal crime rate that is almost 70% higher than the income group (\$30,000-39,999) with the next highest rate. Those at the highest household income level (over \$60,000) and those persons with household incomes between \$15,000-29,999 reported the lowest violent crime rates.²³¹

Attitudes Towards Violence

Recent research indicates British Columbians' attitudes about violence are changing. In 1996 the prevention of violence was an unfamiliar concept to most British Columbians unless it related to themselves as individuals.²³² In 1998, 81% of women and men surveyed believed that violence can be prevented and one quarter of respondents (26%) indicated that violence prevention should start at home, with the education of children.²³³

Kim Campbell, a B.C. MP, is the first woman to become Prime Minister.

Rose Boyko is the first Aboriginal woman in Canada to be appointed to a superior court, the Ontario High Court.

1992

Roberta Bondar is Canada's first female astronaut.

1993

1994

Jane Rule, lesbian writer and activist, is awarded an honorary doctoral degree from UBC.

Looking Back

A Historical Look at Violence against Women

Until the 1970s, the problem of violence against women was all but ignored. In 1970 the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada (est. 1967) undertook to analyze the situation of women in all areas of social and economic life. It is a telling fact that the Commission's report (the Bird Report) made no mention of women who were victims of violence and, by its silence, effectively denied the reality and prevalence of this problem.

At the same time, the women's movement was burgeoning and feminists and activists alike began focusing attention on violence against women. In 1972 the first transition houses in Canada, intended primarily to house battered women, opened in B.C. and Alberta.²³⁴ Writings such as Erin Pizzey's *Scream Quietly or the Neighbours Will Hear You* (England, 1974), and Linda MacLeod's *Wife Battering in Canada* (Canada, 1980) are credited with "naming the violence" and raising consciousness about violence against women.²³⁵

In 1982, the Standing Committee on Health, Welfare and Social Affairs prepared its Report on Violence in the Family: Wife Battering. The report signalled the first public acknowledgment by government of the serious and widespread problem of wife-battering, noting that one out of 10 Canadian women was battered. However, when the report was tabled in the House of Commons on May 12, 1982, laughter echoed through the House of Commons. Canadians were outraged and insisted that government take action. It did.

Canada became the first country to adopt a nationwide policy that encouraged police to lay charges in wife-battering cases. In 1982 the Canadian Criminal Code redefined rape as sexual assault and removed spousal immunity. The number of transition houses more than tripled, from 85 shelters in 1982 to 264 shelters in 1987; counselling programs for batterers grew as well.²³⁶

Throughout the 1990s, while public funding support for services varied greatly, understanding of violence against women broadened. The 1993 national Violence Against Women Survey (Statistics Canada) produced powerful evidence that intimate violence is a pervasive and significant issue in women's lives. New research revealed that violence against women is part of a continuum ranging from verbal insults through physical blows to murder. The dynamics of violence are similar across cultures, but women's experiences and responses may be culturally determined. Violence against women occurs in a larger social context where imbalances between men and women are viewed as acceptable. This leaves women vulnerable to violence. Nevertheless, violence against women is preventable. Today, the issue of violence against women is on the public agenda. This means that women and men in communities across B.C. are working together with government and women's organizations to support women who've experienced violence and to prevent violence before it occurs.

1995
Gloria Cranmer Webster receives an honorary law degree for her work in preserving the language and culture of the Kwakwala people.

1996
Jenny Kwan and Ida Chong are the first Chinese-Canadian women elected to the B.C. legislature.

1996

Reva Joshee, an assistant professor in the Department of Educational Studies at U.B.C., is the first South Asian woman appointed to the B.C. Law Society.

1997 Nadine Caron is the first Aboriginal woman to graduate from UBC's Faculty of Medicine.

1997 The B.C. Human Rights Tribunal rules that prohibiting breastfeeding in the workplace is a form of sex discrimination.

WOMEN AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Women account for only a small portion of the already small segment of the population charged with crime in British Columbia. The number of people charged in 1998 comprised 1.8% of the provincial population.²³⁷ Of the 74,143 people charged with offences, 11,355 (15.3%) were women, and 19.7% of those charges were for violent crimes.²³⁸ Men were charged with 84.7% of all criminal offences in 1998, and 25.4% of those charges were for violent crimes.²³⁹ Charges against women account for nearly 12.3% of all the violent crime charges in 1998.²⁴⁰

Of all the property crime charges against women, 71.9% were for theft under \$5,000 (mainly shoplifting), while 55.2% of men were charged with theft under \$5,000. Men are more likely to be charged with breaking and entering and with theft of vehicles.²⁴¹

Prostitution offences account for 1.9% of the charges against women and 0.7% of the charges against men. Drug offences account for 10% of all charges against women and men.²⁴²

Crimes of Violence ²⁴³			% of Charges Against Women
	Women # Charged	Men # Charged	
Homicide	6	70	7.9
Attempted murder	11	86	11.3
Aggravated sexual assault	1	24	4
Sexual Assault with a weapon	-	39	-
Sexual Assault	26	1,354	1.9
Assault with a weapon causing bodily harm	420	2,674	13.6
Assault charges including aggravated assault, assault causing bodily harm and assaulting a police officer	1,651	10,487	15.7
Total Assault	2,071	13,161	13.6
Other sex offences including sexual interference and sexual touching	2	116	1.7
Robbery	102	1,154	8.1
Total Crimes of Violence	2,237	15,961	12.3%

Women in Prison

According to a one-day snapshot in 1996, women account for 1,694 of 35,850 (4.7%) inmates in the correctional system in Canada²⁴⁴ and are less likely than men to be incarcerated for violent crimes.²⁴⁵ Women inmates in Canada tend to be between 25 and 34 years of age, unattached, unemployed and have grade 9 education or less.²⁴⁶ The majority of women in federal prisons are Caucasian (70%), with Aboriginal women accounting for 20% of the population and Black women accounting for 2.9%.

In British Columbia's correctional facilities, 140 of 2,355 inmates (5.9%) were women.²⁴⁷ In B.C., women aged 25-34 had the highest representation amongst female inmates, at 39%, as compared to 22% of the adult female population of the province.²⁴⁸ Of women in the province's correctional facilities, 61% are Caucasian, 30% are of Aboriginal ancestry, 2% are Black and 5% are Asian.



Beverly Ann Bussan is appointed chief of the Organized Crime Agency of B.C. She is the first B.C. woman to be appointed as Chief Constable.

Adrienne Clarkson is the first member of a visible minority community to be appointed Governor General.

1998

Jenny Kwan becomes the first Chinese-Canadian cabinet minister in B.C. history.

1999

2000

Beverly McLaughlin is the first woman appointed as Canadian Chief Justice.

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